

to your

Health!

"Promoting Good Health Through Information"

Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System • Patient Education Newsletter • Fall 2005

Flu Season Update

Gina Oda, MS, CIC, Infection Control Practitioner and
Laura Markman, RN, MS, Ambulatory Care Nursing

During the months of October through March, we always see an increase in the number of patients with cold and flu symptoms. Here are some common concerns and facts you should know to help you be prepared for flu season this year.

How can I prevent the flu and other respiratory infections this season?

- The best defense against the flu is the flu vaccine. For most people, the best time to get vaccinated is October, so that you will be protected all season long. Despite the vaccine shortage last year, we had enough to vaccinate all veterans who needed it. We do not expect to have any problems with vaccine supply this year. So don't hesitate to attend one of our vaccine clinics or ask your provider now about getting your vaccine!
- A simple thing like washing your hands often can actually protect you from getting colds. And to protect others, always cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or handkerchief.

Is it the flu or just a cold? When should I see my provider? Do I need antibiotics?

- With a cold you can have a cough and runny nose, but usually not a high fever. Influenza (the flu) starts with a high fever (100 degrees or more) and dry cough, but usually not a runny nose. When you have the flu, you often have severe tiredness and body aches, to the point where you need to stay in bed and rest.
- You should call Telephone Care if your symptoms do not improve, or if you develop worse symptoms over time. Patients who have asthma, or other chronic illnesses can have severe complications from the flu, so it important to monitor your symptoms carefully.
- Both influenza and the common cold are viral

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Recipe for Health CHICKEN SALAD

Remove skin from poultry before cooking to lower fat content.

Ingredients:

- 3 1/4 C chicken, cooked, cubed, skinless
- 1/4 C celery, chopped
- 1 Tbsp lemon juice
- 1/2 tsp onion powder
- 1/8 tsp salt*
- 3 Tbsp mayonnaise, low fat

**Reduce sodium by removing the 1/8 tsp of added salt.
New sodium content for each serving is 127 mg.*

Directions:

1. Bake chicken, cut into cubes, and refrigerate.
2. In large bowl, combine rest of ingredients, add chilled chicken and mix well.

Yields: 5 servings – Serving Size: 3/4 cup

Each serving provides:

Calories:	183	Total fiber:	0 g
Total fat:	7 g	Protein:	27 g
Saturated fat:	2 g	Carbohydrates:	1 g
Cholesterol:	78 mg	Potassium:	240 mg
Sodium:	201 mg		

<http://www.smallstep.gov>

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Visit our new patient education website at
<http://www.palo-alto.med.va.gov/patienteducation/patienteducation.htm>

Aquatics: A Wonderful Way to Promote Fitness and Wellness

Alisa Krinsky, CTRS

The benefits of an aquatic therapy program are numerous, especially for patients who cannot bear weight. Aquatic therapy can be useful for pain management and relaxation, reducing edema, increasing circulation and cardio capacity, reducing weight, and increasing flexibility, strength, and endurance. In addition, it provides an opportunity for independent movement, social interaction, success and motivation.

VAPAHCS outpatient fitness and wellness clinics are located at both Menlo Park and Palo Alto Divisions. Patients may be enrolled in the clinic upon referral by their provider. Currently, over 250 patients are treated in this clinic. Recreation therapy staff is responsible for the planning, implementation and evaluation of the therapeutic fitness and wellness programs for both inpatients and outpatients.



Once enrolled in our outpatient Aquatic Therapy/Fitness Clinic, an individualized treatment plan is developed with the patient and clinic time is assigned for treatment to meet the patient's needs. Once patients have achieved their thera-

peutic goals here at VAPAHCS, patients can either participate in self-directed fitness/wellness programs located at VAPAHCS or a Recreation Therapist can refer patients to a community based program, such as an Adaptive PE class at a local community college or Adaptive Exercise class at a local senior center, in order to maintain their overall fitness and wellness.

For any patient fitness and wellness questions, please contact Sherri Heim, CTRS at extension 66176 or 27545. ■

Flu Season Update

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infections, so antibiotics will not work. However, your provider may want to use antiviral medication to treat the flu, or antibiotics in the event you develop a bacterial infection as complication of the flu.

When can I get my vaccine?

Ambulatory Care Nursing will again have a Saturday Flu Clinic. This year it will be on October 22nd, 2005. Flyers will be posted in September as to the time and room location at each site. We expect to have enough vaccine. You can avoid long waits by coming to the Saturday clinic midway during the hours rather than come right at the beginning.

Can't make the Saturday Clinic? There are other ways to obtain your vaccine:

1. At your scheduled Medical or Specialty clinic appointment. This option is available once we receive the vaccine in Pharmacy.
2. Walk-in Flu Clinics will be available Monday through Friday at all sites starting October 24th, 2005:

Palo Alto

Building 100

9am-12noon, 2pm-4pm

Livermore

Building 62, 3rd floor

8:30am-12noon,

1pm-3:30pm

San Jose

1pm-4pm

Monterey

1pm-4pm

Stockton

2pm-3pm

Modesto

2pm-3pm

Sonora

2pm-3pm

New Features Available on My HealthVet

Now order prescription refills online with ease and convenience, and check on the status of your refills anytime. For more information, go to www.myhealth.va.gov

Only enrolled veterans may receive the vaccine. If you have questions about eligibility, please contact the Business Office. ■

A Good Night's Sleep

Sylvia Luong, Pharm.D.

Are You Getting Enough Sleep?

Everyone needs sleep. Researchers estimate that the average amount of sleep adults need is about 8 hours each night. Some people may require more sleep, while others may require less sleep.

The amount of sleep you need changes during your life. Children and teenagers often require more sleep than adults. Older adults often require the same about the same amount of sleep as children. Many older adults get less sleep than they need because they have trouble falling asleep.

What Problems Can Lack Of Sleep Cause?

- Depression
- Attention and memory problems
- Daytime sleepiness
- Nighttime falls
- Use of over-the-counter or prescription sleep aids
- Poor quality of life

What Are the Different Types of Sleep Disorders?

Insomnia

Insomnia is one of the most common sleep disorders. If you have insomnia, you have one or more of the following symptoms:

- Taking a long time to fall asleep - more than 30-45 minutes
- Waking up a lot at night
- Waking up early and not being able to get back to sleep
- Feeling tired when you wake up

Some factors that may cause insomnia include:

- Waking up to use the bathroom (prostate enlargement in men, continence problems in women)
- Pain or discomfort (heartburn, arthritis, menopause, cancer, heart failure, lung disease, and more)
- Parkinson's disease and dementia
- Napping frequently during the day
- Drinking alcohol or caffeine

Breathing Disorders

Sleep apnea and snoring are examples of conditions that make it difficult to breathe during sleep. These problems may cause a person to wake up often at night or be drowsy during the day.

Snoring is a common condition that affects almost 40% of adults. It is more common in older adults and people who are overweight. It is caused by partial blockage of the air-

way passage from the nose to the mouth and the mouth to the lungs. This blockage causes the tissues in these passages to vibrate, which causes the sound produced when someone snores.

The most common type of sleep apnea is obstructive sleep apnea. This occurs when air entering the nose or mouth is partially or completely blocked due to obesity or extra tissue in the back of the throat and mouth. If this occurs many times during the night, it may cause a person to wake frequently and lead to disturbed sleep and daytime sleepiness. Obstructive sleep apnea can increase a person's risk for high blood pressure, stroke, heart disease, and cognitive problems.

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Test your sleep IQ

(True or False)

1. Sleep is a time when your body and brain shut down for rest and relaxation.
2. If you snore loudly and persistently at night and are sleepy during the day, you may have a sleep disorder.
3. The primary cause of insomnia is worry.
4. One cause of not getting enough sleep is restless legs syndrome.
5. People need less sleep as they grow older.

Answers

1. False. Although it is a time when your body rests and restores its energy levels, sleep is an active state that affects both your physical and mental well-being. Adequate restful sleep, like diet and exercise, is critical to good health.
2. True. Persistent loud snoring at night and daytime sleepiness are the main symptoms of a common and serious sleep disorder, sleep apnea.
3. False. Insomnia has many different causes, including physical and mental conditions and stress. Insomnia is the feeling that you don't get enough sleep because you can't fall asleep, stay asleep or get back to sleep.
4. True. Restless legs syndrome is a medical condition where patients have tingling sensations in the legs or arms while sitting or lying still, especially at bedtime.
5. False. As we get older, we don't need less sleep, but we often get less sleep. That's because our ability to sleep for long periods of time and to get into the deep restful stages of sleep decreases with age.

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov>

VA Palo Alto Health Care System Facilities

VA PALO ALTO DIVISION

3801 Miranda Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94304
(650) 493-5000

VA LIVERMORE DIVISION

4951 Arroyo Road
Livermore, CA 94550
(925) 373-4700

VA MENLO PARK DIVISION

795 Willow Road
Menlo Park, CA 94025
(650) 493-5000

VA CAPITOLA OPC

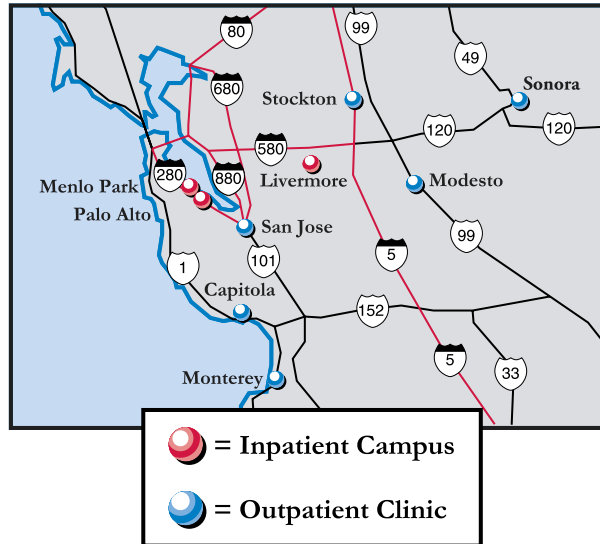
1350 N. 41st Street,
Suite 102
Capitola, CA 95010
(831) 464-5519

VA MODESTO OPC

1524 McHenry Avenue,
Suite 315
Modesto, CA 95350
(209) 557-6200

VA MONTEREY OPC

3401 Engineer Lane
Seaside, CA 93955
(831) 883-3800



VA SAN JOSE OPC

80 Great Oaks Boulevard
San Jose, CA 95119
(408) 363-3000

VA SONORA OPC

19747 Greenley Road
Sonoma, CA 95370
(209) 588-2600

VA STOCKTON OPC

500 W. Hospital Road
Stockton, CA 95231
(209) 946-3400

World Wide Web Address:
www.palo-alto.med.va.gov



A Good Night's Sleep *(continued from page 3)*

Movement Disorders

Movement disorders that can make it difficult for a person to fall asleep include restless legs syndrome (RLS) or periodic limb movement disorder (PLMD). These conditions cause people to move their limbs while they sleep, leading to poor sleep and daytime drowsiness.

Symptoms of RLS include uncomfortable feelings in the legs such as tingling, crawling, or pins and needles. These feelings often make it difficult for people to fall asleep or stay asleep. Although it has not been proven, RLS has been linked to conditions such as iron deficiency, kidney failure and dialysis, pregnancy, and nerve abnormalities.

PLMD is a condition that causes people to kick or jerk their legs every 20-40 seconds during sleep. This often disrupts a person's sleep as well as their partner's sleep.

How Can You Sleep Better?

If you have any of the above problems, you should discuss it with your provider. There are medical treatments that can help reduce the symptoms and help improve your sleep. ■

Questions or Comments?

If you have any questions or topics you would like addressed in *To Your Health* feel free to contact:

Sylvia Luong, PharmD
Pharmacy Practice Resident
VA Palo Alto Health Care System
3801 Miranda Avenue #119 (Pharmacy)
Palo Alto, CA 94304
(650) 493-5000 ext. 63678

To Your Health is published quarterly for VAPAHCS veterans and their families.

Editorial Board:

Noelle Hasson, PharmD
Rosemary Gill, RN, MS
Sylvia Luong, PharmD
Kris Morrow



Tips for Healthy Living

Try your burger with just
lettuce, tomatoes, and onions.

When walking, go up the hills
instead of around them.